



**DARK
HORSE**
20 YEARS
BLADE OF THE
IMMORTAL
120 \$2.99 US
THE SPARKWING
3 OF 4

color manga pinup by
STAN SHAW

HIROAKI SAMURA

BLADE

OF THE IMMORTAL

DIRECT SALES



BLADE

OF THE IMMORTAL

art, story, and front cover by
HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by **DANA LEWIS**
lettering and retouch by **TOMOKO SAITO**



CAST OF CHARACTERS



MANJI

Immortal shin,
vowed to protect Rin
and aid her in her
quest for revenge.



RIN

Last heir of the
Mutsuchi-ryū-dōjō
destroyed by the
Itō-ryū.



HABAKI KAGIMURA

Powerful bangashira,
serving the shōgun
and seeking the secret
of immortality.



DŌA

Dōa, an Itō-ryū warrior,
is slowly befriending
Rin, with neither of
them knowing their real
connection.



ISAKU

Dōa's trusted
bodyguard and
member of the
Itō-ryū.



BURANDO

Deranged medical
examiner, returned
to prison by a
disappointed Kagimura.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Imprisoned in an underground cell, Manji is an unwilling participant in Habaki Kagimura's "immortality experiments." Burando, Kagimura's lead medical examiner, fails to transfer the powers of the *kessen-chu* to another human, and he loses his grip on reality after too many prisoners die under his watch. After receiving a clue to Manji's whereabouts from Gitchi, Rin rejoins Dōa and Isaku in the streets of Edo, only to have Dōa pick another fight with the local police.



designer **SCOTT COOK** editorial assistant **RYAN JORGENSEN**
editor **PHILIP SIMON** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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無限の住人



THE SPARROW NET
-part three-





...AND
**DŌ
SHIN.**



--**TODOROKI-
SAMA!!**



HOHI
NAKI-
ZŌ,
IS IT?

WHY
ARE YOU
WALKING
LIKE
THAT?

SIR!
YOU'RE
JUST
IN
TIME!

WHACK
THESE
VILLAINS!
PLEASEEE!!

WE JUST
MADE A BIG
ARREST. WE
WERE HEADING
BACK,
BUT...

NAKIZŌ,
THOSE
BODIES...

YOUR
MEN, I
PRESUME?

YES,
SIR!



AND
THOSE
TWO DID
IT, SIR!
ESPECIAL-
LY...

...THAT
SHRIMP
!!

THAT LITTLE
MINX DID
TEN OF
MY MEN!
AND...AND MY
CROWN
JEWELS!



YOU LET
A GIRL
KILL THEM?
YOU
IDIOT!!

AINEEE!
MERCY...!





WAIT,
NAKIZŌ.
WHAT
DID *THIS*
GIRL DO?

HUH?



THAT
ONE?
UHH...

...BASICALLY,
SHE...STOOD
THERE WITH
HER MOUTH
OPEN.

**OH! BUT
BEFORE!
BEFORE,
SHE WAS
CHATTER-
ING AWAY
WITH 'EM!**

ONE WAY
OR ANOTHER,
SHE'S *ONE*
OF 'EM!



I SEE...
IT SEEMS
WE'LL HAVE
TO PUT THE
ROPES ON
YOU.

HMM?



NO--

--WAY!!

O-O-SAMURAI-SAMA.
SHE
JUST--

SILENCE!
NO
EXCUSES,
MIS-
CREANT!

SAVE
IT FOR
THE O-SHIRASU!

YEAH!

TAKE
THAT!

FWAP
FWAP

THEY
THINK
I'M
ONE OF
THEM...

...AND I
GUESS,
IN A
WAY, I
AM.



BUT...
I NEVER
DREAMED...

...THEY
COULD DO
SOMETHING
THIS
INSANE!



ARREST
MEANS
DEATH.

I
KNOW
THAT,
BUT--



--BUT,
DÖA,
WHY...?
IF THOSE
GUYS
WERE SO
EASY TO
BUTCH-
ER...



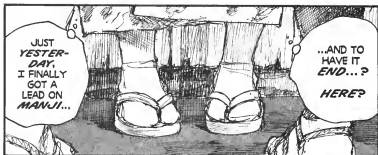
...HOW
HARD
WOULD IT
HAVE BEEN
TO JUST
SHAKE
THEM?

ESPECIALLY...
YOU?!



RIGHT!
BRING
THEM
IN!







SKPAMM!



HAH!
GOT
YA!!

TOLD
YOU
IT WAS
HOPELESS,
MISSY!

OWN!
YAIIE!!





DAMN YOU!
RESIST,
AND I'LL
SHOW *NO*
MERCY!

UHMM...
TODOROKI-
SAMA...?
NO TELLING
WHAT THEY'LL
DO IF YOU
GIVE 'EM TIME.

LET'S JUST
WHACK 'EM
DEAD NOW,
OKAY?
HNN?
TODOROKI-
SAMA?

SKAPON!

SHUT!
UP!!

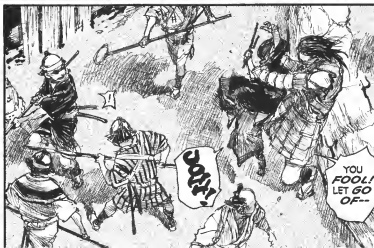
RIN-
SAN.

LOOK
AFTER
DŌA.

PAR-
DON?

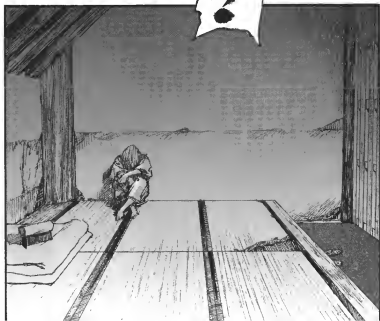














AH-
HAH!
HERE
IT IS.



**FEAST
YOUR EYES!
THOSE
HOLLOW
CHEEKS!**

YAH
HAH
HAH!



THAT
PECULIAR
HAIR. MAL-
NUTRITION.
EH?



POOR
BOY.
YOUR PRECIOUS
PATRON
WOULD JUST
HAVE TO
BE...

...*HABAKI*
KAGIMURA-
DONO...



DAMN
YOU!

HOW
DARE A
MERE *TENI*
SPEAK
THAT WAY
OF A
HATA-
MOTO!

IDIOT!
HEAR
THESE
WORDS!
FROM THE
MOUTH OF A
GO-RÔJÛ!

"A *SHIN-*
BANGATA
WITHOUT
SPEAR OR
SOLDIERS?
NOT EVEN IN THE
CASTLE?
TROUBLE-
MAKER!

"WHO DOES
HE THINK HE IS,
SWEET-TALKING THE
WAKADOSHÏYORI TO
TAKE FELONS FROM
KODENMA PRISON
AT WILL?

"*IMPOSSIBLE*
TO READ...
AND A *ROYAL*
HEADACHE!"
THAT'S WHAT
HE SAID!



SILENCE!
THE
GO-RŌJŪ
DON'T
UNDERSTAND!

THEY DON'T
SEE HOW MUCH
OF WHAT
HABAKI-DONO
STRIVES TO DO
HE DOES FOR
THE GOOD OF
THE PEOPLE--
INDEED, THE
NATION!



HOW
CAN
MEN
LIKE
YOU
JUDGE--



ALL DONE
FOR THE
PEOPLE,
IS IT?

AND
THAT'S
WHY HE
TREATS THE
PEOPLE'S
LIVES LIKE
NOTHING?



THEY
SAY THE
**MACHI-
BUGYŌ**
AND
SHŪGOKU
ARE AT
WITS' END.

THEY
TRANSFER
CONVICTS TO
HABAKI-DONO
AS THEY'RE
TOLD...BUT
NOT A ONE
RETURNS.



**YOU
WIT-
LESS
FOOL!**

THE WHOLE
CASTLE
KNOWS
OF YOUR
**PERVERT-
ED
STUNTS!**



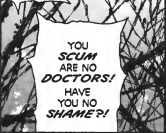
YOU LET
YOURSELVES
GET TALKED
INTO
KILLING
PRISONERS
WITH
UNHEARD
CASES!

THAT...
THAT'S...

...*TOR-
TURED*
ME.
IT *HAS!*
OFTEN...



BUT...
BUT
WHAT
COULD I
DO...?



YOU
SCUM
ARE NO
DOCTORS!
HAVE
YOU NO
SHAME?!



FOR ONE
MAN'S
LIFE
TODAY...
FOR HIS
*SACRI-
FICE...*
SOON...
SOON...

...WE MAY
BE ABLE
TO SAVE
SO *MANY*
MORE!
FACED
WITH THAT
PROSPECT...?



RIGHT?!
IF YOU
TRULY ARE
A DOCTOR,
SURELY
YOU--

*I DO
NOT!!*
LISTEN *WELL*,
BOY...
AND YOU
REMEMBER!



**KOSHO-
GAKU!
KIN-GEI
IGAKU!
KOIHO!**

IN *ALL* OF
OUR MEDICINAL
TRADITIONS,
NO TRUTH CAN
BE FOUND BY
CARVING
A *LIVING*
PATIENT'S
FLESH!

NONE!



IT'S YOUR
BLIND
FAITH IN
RANPO
THAT
TORTURES
YOU!

AND *SO!*
WHAT HAVE
YOU TO SHOW FOR
REJECTING US?
A MOUNTAIN
OF CORPSES!
THIS IS WHAT
YOUR *BANGOKU*
TAUGHT YOU?!



NOW, NOW,
DOCTOR
MORI...
MAYBE
THAT'S SO...
BUT IT
WAS HIS
NANBAN
MEDI-
CINE...

...THAT
CAUGHT
HABAKI-
DONO'S
EYE, MM?



CAN YOU
BLAME THE
POOR LAD FOR
CLINGING TO HIS
ONLY WEAPON,
EVEN WHEN HE
KNOWS IT'S
USELESS?

CAN'T
BRING
MYSELF TO
CHASTISE HIM,
NOT ME.
MMM.



HIT IT
ON THE
NOSE!

**BWA
KAH
KAH
KAH**

YOU OLD
SOFTIE,
DOCTOR
KURE!



BUT HAVE
YOU
HEARD?

JUST
WHAT
HIS GORY
RESEARCH IS
ABOUT?



AHH...
INDEED...

WHAT
WAS
IT...?
IMMOR-
TALITY?
ETERNAL
YOUTH?
OR
BOTH?



IT'S
GOOD TO
DREAM!
WHILE
YOU'RE AT IT,
MAYBE SOME
ETERNAL
VIRILITY,
MM?

**BWAH
HAH
HAH!**
OH, DOCTOR
KURE! YOU
CARD!



THIS
ISN'T A
JOKE!
IT'S
REAL!
REA--!!

**SHUT
UP, YOU
MOUNTE-
BANK!**
LYING YOUR
WAY TO
THE TOP!



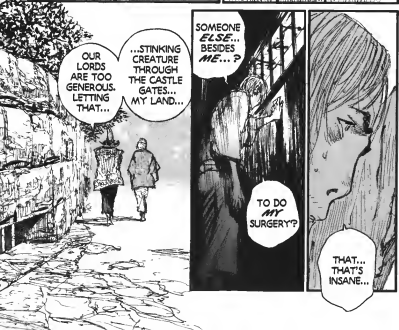
HAVEN'T
YOU
HEARD?

HABAKI-
DONO'S
SEARCHING
HIGH AND LOW
FOR A DOCTOR
TO CLEAN UP
YOUR MESS!

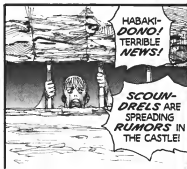


SOONER
OR LATER,
I IMAGINE
HE'LL COME
TO **US.**

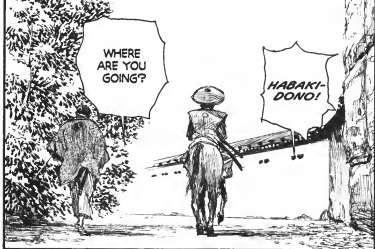
BUT DON'T
WORRY,
I SHAN'T
ANSWER.
I'LL JUST
OFFER SOME
ADVICE.











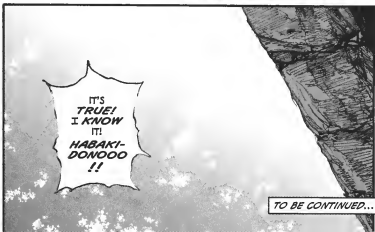
WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?

**HABAKI-
DONO!**



ONLY
ONE
DOCTOR
IN THIS
LAND CAN
DELIVER!

JUST
ONE!
AYAME
BURANDO!



IT'S
TRUE!
I KNOW
IT!
**HABAKI-
DONOOO**
!!

TO BE CONTINUED...!

NEXT MONTH: THE SPARROW NET, Part 4 of 4



Crazy little Dōa may have the quickest temper out of all the Iitō-ryū warriors, but this tigress turns into a kitten when she thinks she's lost her beloved Isaku forever. Downstream from their quick battle with the Edo policemen, Dōa and Rin rest for a moment and ponder their next move. Rin finds her relationship with Dōa taking an odd turn, and a long journey is about to begin for both of them. Samura finally gives some hints regarding Dōa's past before returning us to Manji's cell and the sick experiments being performed by Kagimura's new doctor!

無限在人



GLOSSARY

Bangashira: Head of the banshū.

Bangoku: Barbarian countries. Also a general term for the West.

Banshū: Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Daimyo: Ruler of a feudal fiefdom.

Dōjū: A school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts; here, a training center for swordsmanship.

Dono: Archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of a higher rank.

Dōshin: Police constables from the lower ranks of the samurai caste, serving under yoriki, police "sergeants."

Edo: Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo.

Gō-Rōjū: Senior councillors to the shogun, picked from the most trusted feudal lords.

Han: A feudal domain.

Hatamoto: The hatamoto were the most trusted of the shogun's followers. Hatamoto daimyo (feudal lords) were given the choicest and most strategic han fiefdoms after the Tokugawa unified the country.

Itō-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Kagor: A remote feudal domain on the Japan Sea coast southwest of Edo.

Kanpō: Chinese-based medicine, relying heavily on medicinal plants.

Kessen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal.

Machi-bugyō: One of the top governing positions in Edo, a magistrate with the combined powers of mayor and chief of police. This position was held in monthly rotation by two senior Tokugawa vassals, who were in charge of administration, maintaining the peace, and enforcing the law in Edo. Their rule extended only to commoners, as samurai in Edo were controlled by their own daimyo and his officers. The machi-bugyō had an administrative staff and a small force of armed policemen.

Mitai-ryū: A group of criminals who worked as assassins for the shogunate, earning their freedom by killing assigned targets. Disbanded by Hahaki Kagimura.

Mutenchi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa.

Nanban: Literally, "Southern barbarian." Westerners were called this because their ships first reached Japan from the south and their manners were considered quite rude.

Rengō: A word that can refer both specifically to Dutch medicine and generally to all of Western medicine.

Ryū: A sword school.

Shinbangata: Edo-era term, typical of a palace elder and meaning the same thing as bangashira. The shinbangata was the leader of the officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Shūgoku: The warden of Kodenma Prison. For generations, the holder of this hereditary position adopted the name Ishide Tatewaki.

Shirase: Both a court and interrogation chamber, where guilt was determined by whatever means necessary, including torture.

Taisei: Europe.

Ten: Doctor to the shogun and his ministers.

Wakadoshiyori: While the gō-rōjū elders were the shogun's closest advisors, an advisory council of wakadoshiyori lords were the hands-on managers of the shogunate bureaucracy.

Yoriki: Mid-ranking samurai inspectors, equivalent to modern police lieutenants. Yoriki commanded the lower-ranked dōshin.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL, c/o DARK HORSE COMICS,
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222
www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com

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Many thanks to Jhomar Soriano and Stan Shaw!

Jhomar has been contributing his often-gross, always-hilarious "Rumble to Kapa" strips to our beloved monthly series, and you'll notice a change in title with this month's strip, as Jhomar goes with "On the Evils Under Edo" (refering both to Doc Busando's "On the Perfection of Anatomy" journal and to the fact that Marji has been stuck in that jail cell under Edo Castle, getting hacked and prodded). Looking forward to another run of twisted fun, Jhomar! We have also been graced, those past four issues, with four back-cover pinups by Mr. Stan Shaw. If you place the back covers of *Blade of the Immortal* #s 117 to 120 side by side, you'll see Stan's entire "Seasons" image, an homage to his four favorite Samurai characters. Thanks again, Stan! We'll see you, dear reader, next year - when our January issue arrives and Doc says, "Mm... potatoes."

- Philip S.

JHOMAR SORIANO

ON THE EVILS UNDER EDO







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CRYPTONIA - PCP